The Revival of Interest in Pennsylvania German, 1927-37

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A paper read on December 29, 1936 at the meeting of the Modern Language Association of America held at Richmond, Virginia. Various additions have been made to the Bibliography since that time.

The development of rural public schools and the prejudices of the World War dealt hard blows to Pennsylvania German culture about twenty years ago. Let three examples indicate the general trend: the village of Bismark, Pa., changed its name to Quentin; the Pennsylvania German society omitted its annual meetings for three years, 1917-19; and only one separate volume of dialect material was printed between 1911 and 1927.

But about 1927 came a revival of interest in Pennsylvania German culture. Books and magazine articles called attention to customs, art, cookery, and hexerei. The poet Edith Thomas wrote about antiques and recipes. Professor Cornelius Weygandt of the University of Pennsylvania enthusiastically discussed the "Dutch' arts. Mr. J. George Frederick (formerly of Reading, now head of the Business Bourse, New York) treated history and art as well as cookery. Mr. A. Monroe Aurand of Harrisburg, reprinted the Pow-Wow Book. As part of its annual volumes of Proceedings, the Pennsylvania German Society printed monographs on architecture, medicine, and plant names, as well as Dr. Fogel's collection of proverbs. These eight books, all appearing between 1927 and 1935, were attended by two pamphlet cook-books and numerous articles in newspapers and magazines, such as Edwin Lefevre's "The Meaning of Pennsylvania German Antiques" in the Saturday Evening Post (Sept. 20 and 27, 1935), and Bland Johaneson's "Victualry among the Pennsylvania Germans" in the American Mercury (October, 1926).

The foregoing books and articles are in English, but the same decade has seen an outpouring of books in the dialect. Mr. Heinz Klosz, Librarian of the Ausland-Institut at Stuttgart, Germany, has edited two anthologies—one of them devoted to the Lehigh County writers, A. C. Wuchter and Charles C. More. Books by the late Thomas Harter of Bellefonte and the late Charles C. Ziegler of St. Louis have been reprinted. Mr. Frank G. Light of Lebanon, has put into book form his father's newspaper letters of the 1890's. Mr. A. Monroe Aurand, Jr., has translated some of Edwin Markham's poems, and Louise Weitzel and A. D. Steckel have issued booklets of their writings.

But more new dialect material is appearing in newspapers than in books. The humorous topical letter has been a feature of Pennsylvania newspapers since the days of "Pit Schweffelbrenner" in the 1860's. In 1929 Mr. Klosz found nine such features, mostly in country weeklies. Since then some of these have been discontinued, and new ones have appeared. The one used by most papers is the popular "Der Gus un di Suf," written weekly in prose or verse by the Rev. William H. Erb of Norristown.

The Allentown Morning Call is unique in having two regular dialect features. Mr. Wm. C. Troxell's daily "Pumpernickle Bill" and Dr. P. A. Barba's weekly "Eck." For twelve years Mr. Troxell's two or more daily humorous anecdotes and comments have drawn readers to the Call. He is the most prolific and probably most influential of the contemporary letter-writers, as well as a prominent entertainer at folk festivals and banquets.

"'S Pennsylfawnisch Deitsch Eck" by Dr. Barba, head of the German Department at Muhlenberg College, started as a Saturday feature in March, 1935. It presents historical items, discusses linguistic matters, reprints ballads, and occasionally discovers new writers—like Mr. John Birmelin, the translator of Stevenson and Mother Goose and author of excellent original poems. This Eck serves most usefully as a news-gatherer and unifier of Pennsylvania German culture.

The stage, as well as newspapers, has contributed to the current revival of interest. Sponsored by colleges, societies, and churches, numerous dialect plays have been produced in more than fifteen cities since 1928. The most popular was Mr. Clarence Jobst's "En Gwart Milich un en halb Beint Raam," which has played more than seventy performances before 30,000 persons. Muhlenberg College students under Dr. Barba and Dr. H. H. Reichard have produced several plays; President Schlosser of Elizabethtown College is completing a translation of "The Merchant of Venice." One must mention also the Pennsylvania German Folk Festival at Allentown in June and the State Folk Festival at Lewisburg in August 1936 and 1937.) at both of which dialect recitations and ballads were featured.

The interest of scholars in this revival was indicated by the presentation of three papers on the dialect at the Richmond meeting of the Modern Language Association in December, 1936. At Harvard Mr. Albert Buffington of the German department is completing a grammatical study; at Rockford College (Ill.) Professor Herbert Penzl is making linguistic studies. At the Pennsylvania State College six recent Master's theses have dealt with Pennsylvania German literature. Mr. Heinz Klosz's history of the literature, published in Germany in 1931, is a valuable supplement to Dr. Reichard's history of 1918, and will soon be printed in English translation. Other scholarly articles have appeared in various magazines or have been read at meetings.

To sum up, in the last ten years Pennsylvania German has enjoyed a growth of interest unparalleled since the 1880's. There have appeared 8 books on our culture, 8 books in our dialect, 12 different newspaper features, numerous plays, and many magazine articles. It is a revival led by the colleges; their leadership is attracting a popular following—on the stage, in newspapers, and at folk festivals. Much more material is still to be discovered in old trunks and crumbling newspaper files; new writers are still to be revealed. And with the appearance of books, plays, ballads, folk art, Pennsylvania Germans of tomorrow will be prouder than ever of their cultural heritage.

BOOKS ON PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN CULTURE AND HISTORY

Aurand, A. Monroe, *The Pow-Wow Book*, Harrisburg, 1929. Reprint of the famous hex book, The Long-Lost Friend.

Brendle, Rev. T. R. and Unger, C. W., *Folk Medicine of the Pa. Germans*, Vol. 45 of Proceedings of the Pa. German Society, Norristown, Pa. 1935. Deals with non-occult cures.

Brumbaugh, G. Edwin, *Colonial Architecture of the Pa. Germans*, Vol. 41 of Proceedings of the Pa. German Society, Norristown, Pa., 1933.

Diehl, Edward G. *Pennsylvania German Settlements as an Economic Factor in the American War of Independence*. 'S Pennsylfawnisch Deitsch Eck March 6, 1937.

Edmonds, Albery Sydney, *The Henkel Family of New Market, Va., Early printers in the Shenandoah Valley*. William and Mary College Quarterly, July 1936.

Fogel, Dr. Edwin M., *Proverbs of the Pa. Germans*, Vol. 36 of Proceedings of the Pa. German Society, Lancaster, 1929. About 2,000 proverbs.

Frederick, J. George, *The Pennsylvania Dutch and Their Cookery*, New York, 1935. Also their history and art.

Good, Elias H. *The Pa. German Settlers in Waterloo County, Ontario, Canada*. 'S Pennsylfawnisch Deitsch Eck. April 4, 11, 18, 1936.

Kachline, Susan Ada, *O'd Nazareth; a Brief Sketch of Early Moravian Life*. Bethlehem, Pa. E. H. Lichty, c. 1933.

Knittle, Walter Allen, *Early 18th Century Palatine Emigration*. Dorrance & Co., Phila. 1937.

Koger, Marvin Vastine, *Index to the Names of 30,000 Immigrants—German, Swiss, Dutch and French—into Pennsylvania, 1727-1776, Supplementing the I. Daniel Rupp Ship Load Volume*. Pennington Gap, Va. 1935.

Lick, David E. and Brendle, Rev. T. R., *Plant Names and Plant Lore Among the Pa. Germans*, Vol. 33 of Proceedings of the Pa. German Society, Lancaster, 1926.

Mahr, August C., *A Pennsylvania Dutch "Hexzettel."* Monatshefte fur Deutschen Unterricht. xxvii (1936)

Nolan, J. Bennett, *John Conrad Weiser the Elder: a Forgotten Pioneer*. American German Review, March, 1936.

Radhausen, Paul, *The Germans in Pennsylvania*. German Quarterly, May, 1936.

Reinert, Guy F., *Slip Decorated Pottery of the Pennsylvania Germans*. American-German Review, March, 1936.

Thomas, Edith, *Mary at the Farm*, Harrisburg, 1928. Antiques and recipes.

Weygandt, Dr. Cornelius, *The Red Hills*. Philadelphia, 1929. Folk arts

Pennsylvania German Folklore Society. Vol. I. Allentown, Pa. 1936. Contents: Ziegler, Charles C. 'Drauss un Daheem"; Hinke, Wm. J. and Stoudt, John Baer, "A List of German Immigrants to the American Colonies from Zweibruecken, 1728-1749"; a Catalog of the Penna. Folk Art Exhibition in Bethlehem, Pa., May, 1936: Down, Joseph, The House of Miller on the Millbach: The Architecture, Arts, and Crafts of the Penna. Germans; Downs, Joseph, The Pennsylvania German Galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.)

Pennsylvania German Folklore Society. Vol. II. Consider the Lilies How They Grow.—An Interpretation of the Symbolism of Pennsylvania German Art. John Joseph Stoudt.

Pennsylvania German Society: Pennsylvania German Pioneers. A Publication of the Original Lists of Arrivals in the Port of Philadelphia from 1727 to 1808. Ed. by W. J. Hinke. 3 vols. Norristown, Pa. 1934.

COOK-BOOKS

Appel, Mrs. T. Roberts, *Old Pennsylvania Recipes*, Lancaster, Pa., 1933. 45 recipes in a 16 pp. pamphlet.

Davidow, Leonard S., *Pennsylvania Dutch Cook Book of Fine Old Recipes*, Reading, Pa., 1934. About 200 recipes, some verses and illustrations, 48 pp pamphlet.

BOOKS IN THE PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN DIALECT

Aurand, A. Monroe, Jr., *D'r Mon mit d'r Hock*, Harrisburg, 1934. A translation of 11 poems by Edwin Markham.

Harter, Thomas H., *Boonastiel*, Palmyra, Pa., 1928. Reprint.

Klosz, Heinz, editor, *Lewendiche Schtimme aus Pennsilveni*, Stuttgart and New York, 1929. Selections from Lehigh County writers, A. C. Wuchter and Charles C. More, with a foreword by Charles R. Roberts.

Klosz, Heinz, editor, *Ich schwetz in der Muttersproch. Pfaelzer* Stimmen in Poesie und Prosa. Wiesbadener Volksbuecher, Nr. 266. Verlag "Deutsche Volksbuecher."

Light, Joseph H., *Der Alt Schulmeshter*, Lebanon, 1928. Reprinted articles from the Lebanon Semi-Weekly News of the late 1890's.

Steckel, A. D., *Dumhete*, Fullerton, Pa., 1930. 10 brief stories in a 32 pp. booklet.

Weitzel, Louise A., *Shpectakel*, Lititz, Pa., 1931. 32 poems in a 36 pp. booklet.

Ziegler, Charles C., *Drauss un Deheem*, Allentown, 1936. Reprint, with foreword by Dr. H. H. Reichard, and 4 articles on Pa. German culture. The first annual volume of the Pa. German Folklore Society.

(To Be Concluded)

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(Conclusion)

NEWSPAPER FEATURES

Barba, Dr. Preston A., *'S Pennsylfawnisch Deitsch Eck,* every Saturday, Allentown Morning Call.

Baum, Walter E., *Jonas Grosscup,* Sellersville Herald (weekly). Feature started in 1920; now discontinued.

Brumbach, Earl M., Boyertown Times (weekly). Now succeeded by Mr. Erb's feature in this paper.

Charles, Edwin, *Onkel Yarik,* Middleburg Post (weekly). Discontinued at author's death.

Dieffenbach, Victor C., *Der Olt Bauer,* Lebanon Semi-Weekly News. Discontinued.

Erb, Wm. H., *Der Gus un di Suf,* weekly in the Boyertown Times, Nazareth Item, Orwigsburg News, Quakertown Free Press, etc. Started in 1905; revived in 1929.

High, Eugene L. R., articles in The Magnet, a Railroad Y. M. C. A. publication in Eastern Pennsylvania.

Hower, Harry, *Hen Brenholz,* Lebanon Report (semi-weekly edition). Discontinued.

Harter, T. H., *Boonastiel,* Schuylkill Haven Call (weekly). Reprints.

Landis, Henry K., *Der Grose Henner Sagt,* Lancaster Sunday News. Begun in February, 1931; recently discontinued.

Troxell, Wm. C., *Pumpernickle Bill,* Allentown Morning Call (daily). Begun in February, 1925.

Bilger, Frank, *Der Bonagridle Swetched,* Lebanon Daily News (Tuesday and Friday) and Lebanon Semi-Weekly News. Begun in 1937.

(Except in the cases of Messrs. Barba and Erb, the title of the feature is the author's pen-name.)

PLAYS IN THE PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN DIALECT

Barba, P. A., *Die Verrechelte Rechler.* Dramatization of an unpublished novel of the same name, by Dr. Charles C. More. Produced by Der Deutsche Verein, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, May, 1933.

Barba, P. A., *Die Lumpa Parti.* Freely adapted from The Reverend A. C. Wuchter's long poem of the same name, with additional songs, etc. Produced by Der Deutsche Verein, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, May, 1933.

Baumgartner, ——, *S'is Erbermlich.* Produced in Lehigh and Bucks County towns, 1928.

Brendle, Rev. T. R., *Die Mutter.* Produced at Hershey meeting of the Pa. German Society, 1934.

Brendle, Rev. Thomas R.,—*Die Hoffning.* Performed at Whitehall High School, Lehigh Co., Pa. 1936.

Birmelin, John, *Der Gnopp.* Dialect translation of Julius Rosen's high German comedy, "Der Knopf." Produced, Allentown, 1935.

Birmelin, John, *'M Dr. Helfrich sei Office Stund.* Freely adapted (with additions) from a German play, "Dr. Kranich's Sprechstunde." Produced, Allentown, 1935.

Faust, Claude B., *Om Boarding Haus.* One-act; produced, Macungie, 1930.

Grumbine, C. Ezra, *Inshurens Bisnis.* The first original play written in the dialect; revived, Fredericksburg, Pa., 1931.

Jobst, Clarence, *En Gwart Millich un en halb Beint Raam.* Produced, Emaus, Pa., 1928. ms.

Jobst, Clarence, *Alde Pikters.* An adaptation from Harter's "Boonastiel." Produced, Emaus, Pa. 1930. ms.

Jobst, Clarence, *Die Kaleine Browierts.* Produced, Emaus, Pa. 1930. ms.

Jobst, Clarence, *Es Heller's Chrischtdag.* Dramatization of the short story "Es Wasch Heller's Chrischtdag's Zug" by Dr. Charles C. More. Produced, Emaus, Pa. 1931. ms.

Jobst, Clarence, *Salz.* A comedy suggested by Dr. Charles C. More's short story "Der Hexa Dokter" and Dr. Edwin M. Fogel's "Superstitions of the Pennsylvania Germans. Produced, Emaus, Pa. 1933. ms.

Rauch, E. H., *Rip Van Winkle.* Translation from Boucicault's play of the same name. Revived, Allentown, Pa. 1931.

Schlosser, Dr. Ralph W., *The Merchant of Venice.* Translation of Shakespeare's play, not yet completed. Court scene produced at Pa. German Society Meeting, Pennsburg, Pa. 1934.

Geb Acht Lizzie. A Comedy (dialect translation) produced by the North Jackson Dramatic Club. Schaefferstown, Lebanon County, Pa., 1936. ms.

Wos en Willa. A Comedy, translated from J. Wilbur Fitzpatrick's "The Strange Bequest," produced by the North Jackson Dramatic Club, Schaefferstown, Lebanon County, Pa. 1937. ms.

Wieand, Paul R.—*Der Greizweg Schtore.* 1933.—*'S Fohre Uff Der Train.* 1934—*Vernarre G'Halte.* 1934.—*Der Paep iss Net Verlangt.* 1934.—*Die Maed Hen's Gedhu.* 1935—*Wer Sucht, Der Find.* 1936.—*Die Hochzich am Greizweg,* 1936.

(Mr. Wieand's plays, all in manuscript, enjoyed great popularity throughout Lehigh, Northampton, Bucks, Carbon and Berks Counties. *Der Greizweg Schtore* was performed 60 times; *Die Maed hen's gedhu* 48 times; and *Die Hochzich am Greizwek* about 20 times.)

STUDIES OF THE LITERATURE

Buffington, Albert, *A Grammatical and Linguistic Study of Pennsylvania German.* In preparation.

Hess, Mrs. Mary Rice, *Elsie Singmaster. Penn* State M. A. thesis, 1929. (All the Penn State theses were done with the approval and co-operation of the authors treated; unless otherwise indicated, the theses are unpublished and available only at the Pennsylvania State College Library.)

Klopp, Donald S., *M. A. Gruber, His Life and Dialect Writings.* Penn State M. A. thesis, in preparation.

Klosz, Heinz, *Nebensprachen.* A 60 pp. pamphlet, dealing with Pennsylvania German and other dialects. Vienna, 1929.

Klosz, Heinz, *Die Pennsylvania-deutsche Literatur.* Mitteilungen der Deutschen Akademie Munich. November, 1931. A valuable 43 pp. history of the dialect literature.

Klosz, Heinz, *Varianten der Pennsylvania-deutschen Sprache,* in "Monatshefte fuer deutschen Unterricht," University of Wisconsin, December, 1929.

Kutz, Sara K., *A History and Index of the Pennsylvania German Magazine.* Penn State M. A. thesis, 1935.

Musser, Dorothy, *The Life and Work of Thomas H. Harter.* Penn State M. A. thesis, 1932. Contains some hitherto uncollected "Boonastiel" letters.

Penzl, Dr. Herbert, The Present Status of Research in the Pa. German Dialect. In 'S Pennsylfawnisch Deitsch Eck, Feb. 13, 1937.

Runyeon, Mildred, *Pennsylvania German in the Reading 'Adler', 1837-57.* Penn State M. A. thesis, 1936. Abstracted in the Historical Review of Berks County, April, 1937.

Thompson, Lillian L., *A Critical Biography of Mrs. Helen R. Martin.* Penn State M. A. thesis, 1935.